

with holistic approaches to health were ridiculed by their peers for utilizing unproven methods. Now, as shown by some of the articles in the present forum, many physicians are beginning to recognize that holistic health concepts and practices are valuable to health care; however, they assume that these concepts and practices are so obvious that orthodox medicine today has taken what is needed from them and left behind what does not work. Further, the forum articles have assumed that physicians have been practicing holistic health for a long time and that they should maintain control over its practice.

Dwight L. Wilbur ("A Balance of Science and Art," January 1980) said orthodox medicine "has always encompassed the whole person—the psyche as well as the soma and the interrelationships of physical, emotional and psychic factors in health and disease." John R. Green ("A Pluralistic Approach," January 1980) affirmed that a pluralistic approach is needed in health care; however, he also said "all of medicine is one and physicians should play the leading role in its application."

It is difficult to believe that physicians have only taken what is valuable from the past and that physicians have long practiced holistically. Medical history is replete with examples of valuable knowledge and practices that were buried and left unused because the orthodox institutions at the time did not understand their true significance. As for our present time, it seems highly unlikely that physicians can offer whole person health care when statistics show that most doctor visits average less than ten minutes.

I am particularly concerned that some physicians are now trying to assume control over a field of practice in which they were not trained. Although one can predict this action from William James's insights, I feel it is now important to recognize how holistic health care both complements and is different from orthodox medicine.

One of the most obvious differences at present between holistic health and orthodox medicine is that many holistic health practices assume that a "life energy" (described as "chi" in acupuncture, "bioenergy" in psychic healing, "vital force" in homeopathic medicine, "prana" in yogic practices, to name a few) functions within and animates the human organism, while orthodox medicine assumes the human organism functions only as a physiochemical system. These holistic health perspectives seek to promote or maintain health by stimulating, nourishing or balancing this un-

derlying life energy. Orthodox medicine, in comparison, generally attempts to cure or prevent disease by affecting the physiochemical process of a localized disease. Although the life energy concept is foreign to most practitioners of orthodox medicine, the historical and transcultural application of it in healing,<sup>1,2</sup> as well as the present infant stage of research into subatomic energies and fields of life,<sup>3-5</sup> begins to provide the empirical basis for understanding and utilizing this mystical law of nature.

When these two approaches are each understood and respected, there is greater potential for their complementary function. The lack of understanding and respect for each approach, however, may lead to a philosophical and therapeutic conflict that fails to utilize the optimal features of each practice and diminishes their complementary potential.

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## Holistic Hype

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MEDICINE IS THE professional discipline of helping people improve their health. Modern physicians draw upon a full spectrum of resources, from ancient art to the frontiers of science, in a constantly evolving effort to help people toward that goal. There is no orthodoxy in medicine. Physicians' professional commitment to their patients requires only that the interventions they suggest are proved to be superior to the available alternatives and to have value that outweighs the associated risks.

Cultists restrict their prescriptions on the basis

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of belief. Faddists follow fashions or create their own. Entrepreneurs slant their offerings to contemporary markets. There is no room in the helping professions for competition between practitioners defensively extolling their personal methods or aggressively criticizing those of others. Our aim is to help people help themselves, and only an open-minded eclectic approach puts the needs of patients above our own. Holistic health, high-level wellness and the proliferating assortment of health practitioners seeking identity in these alternative ideologies seem out of place as they vie for followers, finances and fame. That which is proved from their experience and experiment demands to be integrated into regular medical practice. The rest, if its value cannot be objectively substantiated, deserves to be excluded from the practice of professionals.

The secret of caring for a patient has always been to care for the patient. Today the secret is also to care enough to seek constantly to answer two questions: Am I offering everything that can help? Does everything I offer help?

## A Visit from the Healer

ROGER KEENEY HOWE, MD

ONE DAY the great healer Malesh came to the town of Bethel. The people came to him, some to be healed, others to observe him at work, some to question him and learn from him. It was known to all the people in these parts that Malesh was a great teacher; he was fond of saying that his knowledge was of no use unless shared.

One man came to him with a complaint of a stomach ache. Malesh spoke quietly with him for a few moments, then said to him "You must trust in God. He will provide for you, and He shall relieve your pain." Malesh placed his hand on the man's abdomen, and together they shouted "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" The man smiled, said he felt much better, and left.

A woman came to him with the complaint of a backache. After a few questions and a brief examination, Malesh caused her to lie on a padded table. For a few moments he massaged

her back, then he bent her. There was a loud "pop," then another. The woman smiled, thanked Malesh and departed.

One of those who came to observe and question Malesh said "I observe that you are a man of God, and heal by faith. This is certainly good. I also have a strong faith. It fills me with awe that the power of the Lord thus flows through you to produce a cure. In spite of my faith, however, I have failed. I am cut and would be healed. Will you help me?"

He showed Malesh a cut on his arm which was long and deep, but clean. Malesh washed it with clean water and soap, put a plaster of ground root onto it and bound it with clean bandages. He said "Some things the Lord has made your body to do for you without his assistance. This is one. He gives us the root and our hands with which to heal such things. Keep the bandage clean and dry; in seven days you shall be healed."

The man looked puzzled by this, but thanked Malesh and sat back down in the circle to observe and learn more. Another man rose and limped to where Malesh stood. "Malesh, healer, you are a user of the natural healing methods, much as I am. I have known of the ground root which you used on this other man, but it has not healed my wound. What herb would you use for this?" The man rolled up his pant leg and showed a large, red, raised area with pus draining from it down his leg. Malesh looked upon it and spoke thus: "My friend, herbs have limits to their effectiveness. They will not heal all things. Man himself makes some stronger medicines which suffice where nature's remedies fail. I give you these tablets to take one with each meal and one at bedtime until they are gone. This is a powerful medicine which will travel through your bloodstream to fight this infection. You will find yourself healed in ten days."

This man also looked puzzled, but thanked Malesh and resumed his place. A woman who had been sitting quietly now led forward her father. He was an old man who was bent forward and breathed with difficulty.

"Malesh," said the woman, "you are very wise and know all the answers to our problems. Please will you heal my poor father who cannot breathe?"

Malesh began to examine the old man, listening to his breathing and making tests on his lungs. As he did so, he answered the woman: "You are

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